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ABSTRACT

Most of the 10 publications reviewed in this annotated bibliography focus on the principals' role in communicating high expectations for student achievement. The first article describes techniques principals can use to encourage excellence, such as complimenting teachers for exemplary efforts, carefully monitoring instruction via supervision and classroom visits, supporting staff development, and mobilizing community resources to maintain a positive school climate. The second ties principals' instructional leadership prowess to their capacity to connect routine activities to a well-informed understanding of school context and visions for the future. Subsequent reports stress the importance of climate and school effectiveness characteristics. The third article attributes a climate of expectation to teacher and principal behaviors, while the fourth defines three important elements of school culture--content, symbols, and communications patterns. The fifth article emphasizes the influence of principals' active beliefs on student outcomes. The next two articles compare effective and ineffective school characteristics. The eighth study concentrates on principal behaviors involved with encouraging outstanding students, establishing schoolwide academic requirements, creating counseling programs, and setting instructional standards for teachers. The ninth article describes eight variables leading to more effective schooling. The last article characterizes principals as culture builders using symbols, structures, and processes to promote educational excellence and individual growth. (MLH)

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The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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Communicating Expectations for Academic Achievement

1 **Denbo, Sheryl, and Ross, Marlene**. *The Effective Principal: Achieving Equity and Excellence in Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Mid-Atlantic Center for Sex Equity, American University, June 1983. 20 pages. ED 244 009.

"Principals have a responsibility to act in ways that communicate high expectations, that convince teachers and students that they can meet standards of excellence." Many techniques exist to communicate these high expectations. Denbo and Ross discuss them under the headings "encouraging and rewarding excellence," "monitoring instruction and conducting staff evaluations," and "supporting staff development."

To encourage excellence, principals should frequently state their beliefs that all students can learn, that the most important goal for each student is high achievement, and that "the primary goal of the teacher is to facilitate the academic growth of all students." To reward excellence, principals should compliment teachers in their efforts to achieve school goals, recognize teachers whose students improve, and identify and reward outstanding student performance.

By carefully monitoring instruction, principals can positively influence teacher and student expectations. Methods include establishing an ongoing supervision process, being visible in the classrooms, being willing to discuss alternative instructional approaches, and providing praise and/or constructive suggestions for instructional improvement. Classroom observations are another important vehicle for raising expectations. On the basis of these observations, principals can identify outstanding teachers and instructional techniques, modify techniques that do not work, and redesign staff development programs in accordance with observed teacher needs.

The proper support of staff development can also raise expectations. Denbo and Ross suggest that principals "invite experts to present instructional alternatives that positively affect student achievement of targeted populations," encourage staff members to share successful practices at faculty meetings, and evaluate staff development programs regularly to assess changes in teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The authors include a self-assessment form principals can use to identify weak areas and set priorities for improvement. Other general areas of principal effectiveness discussed in this publication are strong curriculum leadership, encouragement of equity and excellence, and mobilization of community resources to maintain a positive school climate.

2 **Dwyer, David C.** "Forging Successful Schools: Realistic Expectations for Principals." *Educational Horizons*, 63, 1 (Fall 1984), pp. 3-8. EJ 306 213.

Effective principal, effective school. This old maxim has been resurrected by researchers in recent years, who have correlated certain principal behaviors with school success. But the conclusions of this research do not give a rounded picture of the principal's actual role in raising students' and teachers' expectations for success.

To find out what principals actually do to encourage high student achievement, Dwyer and his colleagues at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development held lengthy, open-ended interviews with thirty-two principals in the San Francisco area. Then they spent eight weeks shadowing and interviewing five of these principals as they went about their daily activities. In the final phase—still going on as Dwyer wrote this article—the researchers are observing the instructional leadership behavior of twelve additional principals for an entire year. Each principal's situation is different, Dwyer reports, and each uses different techniques to engender success, but certain common themes also emerged.

In the area of expectations, "each principal emphasized the importance of achievement," particularly in language and math skills, but each also "held other expectations relative to the student groups with which they worked," such as getting students off the welfare cycle or raising their self-concepts. "Principals' expectations for their students," states Dwyer, "were an essential aspect of their overarching plan and influenced" their routine activities.

The principals treated school climate "as a diverse set of properties that communicates to students that school can be pleasant, can help them achieve, and is a serious work place." Through their "constant motion" principals gave students and teachers the impression "that their principals knew everything that went on in the building— even when logic dictated that they could not." While roaming the hallways the principals "would admonish or praise, prompt or prohibit, in rapid-fire encounters."

Thus these principals improved instruction not by means of new programs or innovation but through a "strategy of incremental action"— using "often repeated, gentle nudges that moved the schools in the intended direction." In sum, "each principal's success as an instructional leader was hinged to his or her capacity to connect routine activities to a well-informed understanding of the school's context and his or her vision of what that school could be for students."

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3 **Fairman, Marvin, and Clark, Elizabeth**. "Moving toward Excellence: A Model to Increase Student Productivity." *NASSP Bulletin*, 69, 477 (January 1985), pp. 6-11. EJ 311 650.

"Teacher expectations of their students reaching high levels of achievement regardless of background" is one of the distinguishing characteristics of effective schools, say the authors, and it is the principal who is largely responsible for creating this climate of high expectations.

The climate of expectations in a school works in a cyclical fashion—the expectations of school community members determine their behavior, and this behavior in turn influences the expectations for success or failure in the next turn of the wheel. Principals in effective schools take advantage of this cycle by recognizing and rewarding excellence appropriately, which nudges the school's overall climate toward one with higher expectations. Principals in ineffective schools, on the other hand, fail to acknowledge teachers' and students' positive behaviors, "therefore negating any cumulative positive effect their behavior could have on increasing the expectations for teachers and students."

"The tone for establishing high expectations starts with principals who must have high expectations for themselves, for faculty members, and for students," say the authors. "They help establish and capitalize on the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy by modeling appropriate behavior." The authors also discuss other key factors of effective schools, including strong administrative leadership, a safe and orderly school climate, emphasis on basic skills, and a system for monitoring and assessing student performance that is tied to the school's instructional objectives.

4 **Firestone, William A., and Wilson, Bruce L**. *Creating Cultures That Support Instruction: A View of the Principal's Leadership Role*. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools, Inc., January 1984. 9 pages. ED 242 101.

School culture—"the system of publicly and collectively accepted meanings, beliefs, values, and assumptions that a staff uses to guide its actions and interpret its surroundings"—can strongly influence student achievement. In this paper, Firestone and Wilson first discuss three important elements of school culture—content, symbols, and communications patterns—and then suggest concrete methods principals can use to manipulate these elements to raise students' expectations and consequent achievement.

"Content specifies the commitments and task definitions that are desirable" in the school, for example, acceptable standards for student achievement and methods of maintaining order. To use this element of culture profitably, the principal must firmly decide "what his or her own values, task definitions, and commitments are." This sounds simple but is actually difficult in practice because "being in favor of some things often requires not supporting others." Studies indicate that principals tend to overly accommodate to others' needs and desires rather than making strong commitments. "Such accommodations can undermine strong cultures," the authors caution.

"Symbols" of a culture are defined as "the means used to carry its content." Stories—both true events and the myths and legends of a school—are major symbols. Other symbols are physical objects, such as flags, trophies, report cards, and so forth. Rituals, such as assemblies, meetings, and conferences, are yet another form of symbol. Principals are in an ideal position to manipulate the symbol system of a school in a variety of ways. Besides "managing stories," principals can allocate funds, space, and time in ways that "symbolize the importance given to instruction and learning."

"Communications patterns help reinforce the cultural content carried by symbols" and are essential to the proper interpretation of these symbols. "Here it is important to know both the quantity of communication and how it is organized," state the authors. Principals' communications patterns are generally characterized by numerous impromptu conversations with staff and students throughout the day. "The trick to shaping a culture that effectively supports instruction is maintaining consistency across hundreds of separate interactions," so that the gestalt of the principal's underlying values becomes obvious to all members of the school community.

5 **Glasman, Naftaly S**. "Student Achievement and the School Principal." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 6, 3 (Fall 1984), pp. 283-296. EJ 307 809.

How does the school principal influence student achievement? The linkage between school principal behavior and student outcomes has not been studied in great depth, says Glasman. Past studies have focused "either primarily on the school principal or primarily on student achievement," but not on their linkage, except for some studies limited to unusually effective schools. Glasman here reviews these past studies and their limitations, then focuses on the question of how principal behavior might influence student achievement via the symbol system in the school.

The author's conceptual focus "is on principals' active beliefs that, if they use data on gains in their interactions with teachers, they can improve the gains." In other words, if the principal shares test data with teachers that show improving student performance, the teachers are more likely to continue behaviors that improve student test scores. This is a classic method of manipulating the cycle of expectations and behaviors in an organization to promote organizational improvement.

Glasman goes on to suggest that principals' beliefs that they can influence student outcomes may be more important than whether they actually can influence these outcomes. Adopting such a strong "value stance" can directly influence teachers' beliefs that they, too, can influence student outcomes. The beliefs of teachers, says Glasman, are actually more important than those of principals, because teachers work much more closely with students than do principals.

6 **Jackson, Bruce**. "Lowered Expectations: How Schools Reward Incompetence." *Phi Delta Kappan*, 67, 4 (December 1985), pp. 304- 305. EJ number not yet assigned.

In this "point of view" article, Jackson contends that secondary schools breed incompetence and lowered expectations by rewarding students for failure. He goes on to make several suggestions for reforming the current system.

In elementary schools, "the educational system works because students' learning processes are closely supervised," because the approval of teachers and other adults is important to young children, and because additional work is often required for students who are falling behind. As students age, their values and orientations change—peer approval becomes more important than adult approval, and time away from school is more highly valued than time in school. In addition, the ability of schools to closely supervise student progress is compromised by larger teacher-student ratios and different organizational structures.

"For teachers in the middle or junior high school, following up on missing homework assignments becomes a logistical nightmare," says Jackson. Students at this age discover a "vast honeycomb of loopholes"—such as cutting classes and opting for easy courses—that make it easier and more rewarding to be an incompetent than to be a good student. In short, incompetence is rewarded with what students of this age highly value: "time- away-from-task." Not surprisingly, Jackson considers time-on-task to be

the key to reforming the system.

Schools can abolish easy courses by requiring the amount of work in classes with equal credit to be approximately equal across the board. Remedial courses should carry no credit, and the regular courses should still be required. A homework policy can be implemented so that students who do not turn in their assignments are required to attend a properly supervised homework clinic after regular school hours. An attendance policy can be established that makes the penalty for absence or tardiness "sharply greater" than the benefits. "The consequences for cuts and tardies must be inexorable and centrally administered, not dependent on harried teachers who must fight their way through several levels of referral."

These are just a few of the means Jackson suggests for "deglamorizing the alternatives" to student time-on-task. He concludes that principals "can control the reward structure built into the school system" to raise students' expectations and realizations of success.

7 **Rosenholtz, Susan J.** "Effective Schools: Interpreting the Evidence." *American Journal of Education*, 93, 3 (May 1985), pp. 352-388. EJ 319 415.

Ineffective schools are characterized by "loose coupling," particularly between administrative intent and teacher actions. Effective schools, on the other hand, are characterized by "tighter congruence between values, norms, and behaviors of principals and teachers."

The key to the unity of effective schools appears to lie in the attitudes and behaviors of the principal. "Ineffective principals, uncertain that changes in student performance can actually be brought about, appear not to act in ways that make student learning possible." In contrast, says Rosenholtz, principals of effective schools "convey certainty that teachers can improve student performance and that students themselves are capable of learning."

Such principals make goals for high student achievement central to their school's identity. They "set explicit operational goals regarding students' academic performance, which are clearly communicated to their staff members." When progress does not meet their goals, they press for more teacher commitment, hold teachers accountable for their actions, and "communicate high expectations about the progress teachers are capable of making."

Principals also generate a single-mindedness of school purpose by recruiting like-minded staff and then carefully socializing new teachers with the organization's norms. "Effective principals recruit and attract teachers who accept and share the prevailing standards and values of the faculty, with the goals of the school serving as focal points around which decisions are made." Likewise, principals are careful that new entrants acquire the positive perspectives and norms of the school's culture, and they breed collegiality in the entire teaching staff.

The centrality of student achievement, as communicated by the principals and by school norms, gives teachers concrete goals toward which to direct their efforts. The faculty's success in improving student achievement motivates them to seek further improvement. "The more teachers succeed with students, the greater their certainty that it is possible to succeed," and the greater their efforts will be in pursuing that success.

8 **Russell, James S., and others.** *Linking the Behaviors and Activities of Secondary School Principals to School Effectiveness: A Focus on Effective and Ineffective Behaviors*. Eugene, Oregon: Center for Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon, June 1985. 55 pages. ED 258 322.

One of the key attributes of effective schools is high expectations for student performance. But what specific behaviors do the principals of effective schools engage in to raise students' expectations for success? This excellent report—the summary of a comprehensive study of the effective schools literature—lists and discusses these and many other principal behaviors associated with school success.

One of the ways principals of effective schools communicate expectations for achievement is by directly encouraging students to pursue challenging academic goals. Specific behaviors found by the study include providing extra academic work for outstanding students without embarrassing them in front of their peers, encouraging student competition in academic contests, and encouraging students to take highly challenging courses. The principal also "frequently mentions the high academic standing of the school in addressing students," gives an inspirational speech to students at the beginning of the year, and clearly "explains academic goals of the school to the students."

A second general class of principal behaviors involves establishing schoolwide academic requirements. Specific behaviors include requiring seniors to attend school for the entire day whether or not they need to attend to meet minimum graduation requirements, establishing a mastery program so students can repeat classes in which they received low passing marks, establishing a schoolwide English requirement such that papers turned in for every class must be written in proper English, and refusing to pass students who do not pass minimum competency requirements.

Other general classes of desirable principal behaviors include expecting "counseling programs to challenge students" and setting instructional standards for teachers. In the latter category, effective principals expect "teachers to teach a full 50 minutes" and require "a minimum of one instructional goal per year for each teacher relating to student performance." Also discussed are "ineffective" principal behaviors for raising expectations, which are for the most part the opposite of the effective behaviors outlined above.

9 **Stevens, Betty, editor**. *School Effectiveness: Eight Variables That Make a Difference*. Lansing: Michigan State Board of Education, March 1985. 37 pages. ED 257 218.

Of the many factors associated with effective schools, the most important may be the high expectations both principals and teachers hold for student achievement. These high expectations are communicated to students in many ways, several of which are detailed in this research review.

"Not only must the expectations of principals and teachers be clearly conveyed to students," say the authors, "they must also be believed and accepted by the students." Expectations should be clearly stated, "evaluations of student achievement and reiteration of expectations must occur on a regular basis," and students should have easy access to the principal. The principal of one secondary school conveys these expectations and at the same time gains valuable student feedback by meeting with classes of students at least twice a school term to discuss "how it's going."

Principals can also raise students' expectations for success by raising teachers' expectations for student success. "As instructional leader, the principal must convince teachers that all students can be taught and that none will fall below minimum levels of achievement." The best way to convey such expectations to teachers is to work cooperatively with them to develop the school's achievement standards.

Expectations for student achievement are also communicated by strongly emphasizing the accomplishment of the school's academic objectives. Principals of effective schools establish "concrete norms and goals for teachers and students," formulate "procedures for evaluation of achievement of objectives," and frequently make classroom observations.

10 **Willower, Donald J**. "School Principals, School Cultures, and School Improvement." *Educational Horizons*, 63, 1 (Fall 1984), pp. 35-38. EJ 306 217.

Building a school culture geared to high student achievement requires that the principal be more than a facility manager and instructional technician. "The principal should be a creator and user of the symbols, structures, and processes that promote educational excellence and individual growth," says Willower in this insightful article. In other words, the principal should view him- or herself as a "culture builder," a manipulator of the underlying structure of norms, standards, and expectations that really determines a school's success.

Willower begins by describing the organizational characteristics of the "Generic American Public Schools." The schools themselves are "politically vulnerable" public organizations, open to a wide range of external political influences. Teachers view themselves as hard-working, autonomous professionals. Students, from about grade 4 on, develop an acute awareness of peers and student subgroups that often overrides academic interests. Principals, despite a decrease in their once wide discretionary powers, "still see themselves as responsible for just about everything that goes on in their buildings."

Particular school cultures may differ significantly from the generic portrait of the American public school painted above. The important point, says Willower, is that the complex social system of the school provides the "key to building a particular school culture that sustains school improvement." An enhanced awareness of a school's informal organizational structure will help principals go beyond the traditional approaches to school improvement and will help them intelligently manipulate community support, school goals, teacher activities, pupil control policies, and their own time and activities to create a school culture conducive to excellence.

Willower suggests several ways principals can implement and strengthen such a culture. For example, they can establish "formal teacher subgroups that meet regularly to deal with instructional matters"; such group settings can "routinely provide both ideas and social support for school improvement." Also, Willower advises that "paperwork and regulations" not essential for the school's purposes "should be dropped." When principals praise behavior consistent with educational values and discourage its opposite, they should clearly communicate the reasons for their actions. Finally, principals should deliberately communicate the "purposes and customs of the organization" to all newcomers—teachers, students, and parents.

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